

prejudice against them because they are supposed to be rich. State, municipal and corporate promises made to them for the purpose of obtaining expected benefits to us should be sacredly performed. We will not encourage, sanction or countenance financial repudiation in any form.

Railroads, while their earnings and profits belong to their owners, are the servants of the public and under our system are subject to government control. The time is approaching, if it has not arrived, for the adoption of a policy which, without wrong to their owners, shall look towards the conversion of them into public highways owned and controlled by the nation. While we admit our obligations to those whose enterprise and capital have constructed and bettered them, we must always insist upon a just and strict enforcement of their obligations to the public. Against vigorous opposition we have created a railroad commission. Its benefits are apparent and ought to be admitted by all. To it we are indebted for the regulation and in many cases the reduction of traffic rates and to the excellent service which is given by most of the railroads in our State. Their passenger rates which prevail in our State seem to be not unreasonable. It is questionable whether at this session of our Legislature there should be attempted a policy of rate reductions in this particular. As to freight rates, there are evidences that they are excessive when compared with the enormous decline in the value of the commodities upon which they are levied.

The State has a large and what ought to be a controlling interest in the North Carolina Railroad. An attempt has been made to pass from the State its interest in this great property for what is believed to be an inadequate consideration. The lease of ninety-nine years of all the rights, franchises and property, real and personal and mixed, of this railroad company to a foreign or non-resident corporation was made without the sanction of the